

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Long-range planning for Algonac State Park began in June of 2003 as one of four parks statewide where a new planning philosophy was implemented. “Management Planning”, a comprehensive, resource based process, is Parks and Recreation Division’s (PRD) adaptation of National Park Service planning methodology. In our iteration of this process, we focus our attention on the four principles of the PRD Mission Statement. To that end we thoroughly inventory the (1) natural resource values of the park, establish its (2) historic/cultural resources, identify the (3) recreational opportunities and develop the (4) educational and interpretation opportunities of the park.

With this base of knowledge and with input of the “Planning Team” (made up of Department resource staff, stakeholders and public), we established an ‘identity’ for the park. The key significance of Algonac SP is twofold:

First, “Algonac State Park protects globally significant lakeplain prairie and lakeplain oak openings, among the rarest and most unique natural communities in Michigan. At least 22 endangered, threatened, or special concern plant and animal species live within Algonac State Park” (Palmgren, 2002).



Second is its recreational importance for the magnificent viewing opportunities of Great Lakes shipping activity on the St. Clair River. This was one of the principle reasons for the establishment of Algonac State Park in 1937.

In concert with this analysis of the park, the Planning Team also established the appropriate Management Zones and their extent of influence on the park. From a pallet of nine standard zones, we utilized six for Algonac SP. The Management Zone Plan is found on page 16, and a thorough review of all zones accompanies that graphic. A condensed review of the zones applied at Algonac SP is as follows:

- Primitive Zone – of the total 1,408 acres in the park, 1,170 acres of undeveloped land fall into this zone description, and represent the primary target for lakeplain ecosystem restoration efforts.
- Ecologically Sensitive Zone – exists as a sub-set of the Primitive Zone. Totalling approximately 90 acres, this ‘seasonal’ designation protects two active heron rookeries. It will be closed during the non-hunting season at Algonac SP. (April 1-September 15)
- Natural Resource Recreation Zone – 62 acres of park land lies adjacent to and serves to buffer the high-use Developed Recreation Zone from the Primitive Zone.
- Developed Recreation Zone – this 67 acre zone incorporates all of the modern campgrounds, day-use areas and archery and trap ranges.
- Scenic Zone – recognizes the viewing opportunities of the St. Clair River from the shoreline frontage of the park. The acreage of this zone totals approximately twelve (12) acres of the park.
- Visitor Services Zone – takes in the headquarters and shop area of the park, and totals just over four acres of land.

The Primitive Zone is of the greatest influence, with 1,170 acres comprising 83% of the park. This zone encompasses the lakeplain ecosystem, with seven NRC ‘designated areas’, and the proposed “Natural Area” designation under law of 370 acres. The zone is highly influenced by the hydrology of the area...a critical component of this unique ecosystem. As such, it is subject to fluctuating water levels, which can and do impact or inundate significant portions of the zone over time. The sensitivity of this ecosystem is such that the limitations of the Primitive Zone are needed to protect existing lakeplain remnants and the ongoing restoration efforts. **It is recommended to expand the legal “Natural Area” designation to encompass this entire zone.** This would provide enforceable status to the use limitations that are needed. In this zone there is only limited trail development permitted, with no mechanized or equestrian uses allowed.

This same ecosystem extends beyond the historic boundaries of the park. As properties are acquired within the new boundaries (and/or with expansion of boundaries), the Primitive Zone will expand to incorporate them, and at some point, expansion of the Natural Area designation would follow.

# INTRODUCTION

**Planning Process Overview** (“Management Planning Process Outline”) – The Management Planning Process develops a series of planning steps, each built upon the previous, that keep all planning and action decisions focused on (1) the mission of the Parks and Recreation Division, and (2) the specific Purpose and Significance of the park.

There are four stages of planning, implemented in the following order:

- General Management Plan (GMP) - 20-year long-range goals
- 10-Year Action Plan - long range action goals to attain the GMP
- 5-Year Action Plan – specific actions to implement
- Annual Action Plan and Progress Report – what will be done this year and what progress was made on last year’s plan

This is the **General Management Plan**, the first step in our planning process. In this stage of planning, we are defining what the park will look like in twenty years. What will be the condition of flora and fauna? How will we address historic and cultural resources? What recreational opportunities will be provided? What education and interpretation efforts will meet the visitor? What will guide the manager’s operational decisions? What will be the visitor’s overall experience?

A key tool of this plan is the identification of “Management Zones” (“Management Zone Definitions”) which define specific characteristics of the land, addressing management for:

- Natural features
- Historic/cultural features
- Education/interpretation
- Recreational opportunities

These four elements represent the primary elements of the PRD Mission Statement, and provide the primary guidance for both planning and management decisions. Within the parameters of this guidance, “Purpose” and “Significance” statements are developed for the park that establishes its unique identity and focus. No two parks are the same and this emphasis is directed at ensuring that the differences found from park to park are acknowledged, highlighted and celebrated.

**Planning Objectives** - The objective of this General Management Plan is to bring together Department staff, impacted and impacting stakeholders, and the public who use the park in a planning process that will define and clarify the unique “Purpose” and “Significance” of Algonac State Park. Collectively, we will

reinforce those attributes in the planning and management decisions that impact the park through the implementation of the Management Zone Plan. Future action plans, whether focused on a development proposal, a resource improvement initiative, an interpretive program, or day-to-day management of the park will be guided by this General Management Plan.

## PLANNING TEAM

Accomplishment of our planning objectives was and is dependent upon the valuable input provided by all members of the 'Planning Team'. Following are the names of those critical participants in this planning process:

<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Representing</u></b>
Paul N. Curtis, Chair	MDNR-PRD, Management Plan Administrator
Steve Pondo	MDNR-PRD, Park Manager
Anna Sylvester	MDNR-PRD, Pontiac North (past) District Supervisor
Luba Sitar	MDNR-PRD, Pontiac North (current) District Supervisor
Kristen Bennett	MDNR-PRD, Pontiac North District Planner
Carl Lindell	MDNR-PRD, Bay City District Supervisor
Mark Sine	MDNR-PRD, Lakeport SP Manager
Dan Lord	MDNR-PRD, Statewide Development Planner
Ray Fahlsing	MDNR-PRD, Stewardship Program Manager
Sarah Zalewski	MDNR-PRD, Park Ranger
Ron Pinson	MDNR-LED, Conservation Officer
Earl Cole	MDNR-FMFM, Fire Officer
Ernie Kafkas	MDNR-WD, Wildlife Biologist
Jeff Braunscheidel	MDNR-FD, Fisheries Biologist
Douglas Finley	MDNR-EO, Education and Outreach Manager
Mark Brochu	St. Clair County, Parks Director
Fred Fuller	St. Clair County, Drain Commissioner
Lisa Brush	Southeast Michigan Stewardship Network
Bill Bakeman	St. Clair Flats Re-enactment Group
Bill Furtaw	Michigan United Conservation Clubs, District 8
Dan Prior	Prior Plumbing Company (local business)